strength to the weary, and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary and young men stumble and fall, but those who hope in the Lord, will renew their strength, they will soar on wings like eagles, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not faint.

Thank You God—for George Vernon Irons. His wonderful, wonderful family—those who have known him best and loved him best. Who he has known best and loved so dearly. Holy Father, he has run with patience the race of life and he has brought the banner home. He has fought a good fight, he has finished his course, he has kept the faith. Thank Thee for what he has meant to every one of us. Thank Thee for George, Jr., thank Thee for Bill, grandson, great grandson—all the family. For the happiness they have shared together. For the joy they have known in life because of this wonderful man. Thank Thee for the many lives in which he has made a difference. Thank Thee, that he has taken that which was so very rough and polished a few of the edges, knocked off some of the sharp places, taught us a few lessons, and helped us to be on our way. Thank Thee for his wonderful Christian spirit—for that mountain of modesty at the center of his being, for that quick mind, for that winsome personality, for that wonderful wit. For those things in life in which he stood so very tall. Thank Thee for this Christian southern gentleman. Having shared some of life with him, may we be found the stronger for the living of life in these days. May his light always shine before us, that we would see his good works, but then glorify his father who is in Heaven. Thank Thee that he lives there now with Thee. Bless him and hold him close now and forever. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, through Jesus our Saviour, we pray. Amen.

For this Christian soldier who defended his nation for a third of the 20th century in war and peace we will close with the organ piece: onward Christian soldiers—as he requested. Please remember the words and how they related to the life of this admired and beloved Alabamian, as we stand together and depart.

THE COUNTY SCHOOLS FUNDING REVITALIZATION ACT OF 1999

HON. ALLEN BOYD

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 1, 1999

Mr. BOYD. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, along with my colleague Representative NATHAN DEAL, I introduced H.R. 2389, the ''County Schools Funding Revitalization Act of 1999.'' This legislation is based on principles that were part of a compromise agreement reached by the National Forest Counties & Schools Coalition. This bill is significant because it was developed not by a ''Washington knows best'', top-down approach, but rather through ''a home-grown'', bottom-up approach that has finally reached a consensus. This unique coalition includes over 500 groups from approximately 32 states including school superintendents (including Hal Summers, School Superintendent of Liberty County, Florida Schools), county commissioners (including the Columbia County, Florida Board of County Commissioners), educators, several labor groups, the National Educational Association and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

In 1908, the federal government recognized that counties with federal lands were at an economic disadvantage since the federal government was the dominant landowner in many of these communities and therefore these counties were powerless to tax these lands. Recognizing this, Congress entered into a compact with rural forest communities in which 25% of the revenues from National Forests would be paid to the states for impacted counties in compensation for their diminished local property tax base. By law, these revenues finance rural public schools and local road infrastructure. As one can imagine, these counties relied heavily on this revenue for education and infrastructure.

However, in recent years, the principal source of these revenues, federal timber sales, has been sharply curtailed due to changes in federal forest management policy, and those revenues shared with states and counties have declined precipitously. Payments to many counties have dropped to less than 10% of their historic levels under this compact. This impact on rural communities and schools has been staggering. The decline in shared revenues has severely impacted or crippled educational funding, and the quality of education provided, in the affected counties. Many schools have been forced to lay off teachers, bus drivers, nurses, and other employees; postpone badly needed building repairs and other capital expenditures; eliminate lunch programs; and curtail extracurricular activities.

Rural communities have also suffered from severe economic downturns causing high unemployment, domestic violence, substance abuse, and family dislocation. They are finding it difficult to recruit new business and to meet the demands of health and social issues associated with the displacement and unemployment. Finally, local county budgets have also been badly strained that communities have been forced to cut funding for social programs and local infrastructure to offset lost 25% payment revenues.

This issue has had a significant impact on a large portion of the congressional district that I have the honor of representing in the House, which is the Second Congressional District of Florida. It is a largely rural district in Florida's panhandle that encompasses 19 counties and two national forests, the Apalachicola and the Osceola. On May 18, 1999, Hal Summers, Superintendent of Schools in Liberty County, Florida, testified before the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition, and Forestry about the various effects that the loss of timber revenue from the Apalachicola National Forest has had on the children of Liberty County.

Liberty County is a rural county with a population of about 7,000 including 1,300 schoolchildren. That is the smallest county population of schoolchildren in the entire state of Florida. It has a total land area of 525,000 acres, 97% of which is forested, with half of that owned by the U.S. Forest Service within the Apalachicola. Until recently, the forest was the mainstay of a strong local forest product-based economy, and through sharing 25% of the revenue from timber sales, provided substantial support for the local schools and government.

In 1989, the Forest Service began to manage its land in a different way, mostly to protect the habitat for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. It is interesting to note that Liberty County has the only recovered population of this bird in the world. Perhaps the most significant thing about these changes is not the decline in harvest, but rather the fact that in 1998 the net annual growth of timber on the Apalachicola National Forest was about 800% greater than the volume harvested. The sawtimber growth is approximately 50 times greater than the volume harvested.

The effects of timber harvest reduction on forest revenues to the 4 counties and schools districts within the Apalachicola is that the 25% payments have declined in value from a 1987–93, 5 year average (in 1998 dollars) of $1,905,000 to $220,000 in 1998; a loss of 89%. Due to this reduction, the Liberty County School District was forced to take several painful steps. These steps included reducing school staffing by 11 positions out of a total of 151; increasing the average class size from 23 to 28 students; discontinuing the enrichment programs in health, computer education, and humanities; discontinuing vocational programs in industrial arts, small engine repair, and electronics (80% of the graduates do not attend college); curtailing the school media center; eliminating certified art and music teachers from the elementary school staffs; reducing the Pre-K program, formerly the only program in the state to serve all four-year olds; and terminating a new program in technology acquisition, which would have placed the county on par with other Florida school districts.

The impacts on county government have also been very significant. The County road crew was reduced from 23 to 18 positions. This staff reduction, plus equipment obsolescence and the inability to purchase needed supplied and materials, has resulted in the deterioration of the rural road system. In 1994, the County was forced to float a $1,780,000 bond issue in order to meet current road needs. It is unclear how the county will meet its future road responsibilities in the absence of a substantial increase in the 25% payments from timber sale receipts. County employees suffered a 10% salary cut, which was partially restored following the imposition of a 1% local option sales tax and 7 cents per gallon gas tax. Finally, the Sheriff's Office and Emergency Medical Service have been forced to curtail hours and reduce services. As a result of this action, Liberty County remains the only county in Florida without an advanced life support system as part of the county emergency response organization.

However, the most far-reaching and devastating impact of these declining revenues is the adverse effect on the future of our children. An education system crippled by such funding cuts cannot train our young people in the skills needed to join tomorrow's society as contributing, functioning citizens.

In 1993, the Congress enacted a law which provided an alternative annual safety net payment system for 72 counties in the northwest region of the country, where federal timber sales had been restricted or prohibited to protect the northern spotted owl. This authority for the 1993 safety net program will expire in 2003. No comparable protection has been provided for the other 730 counties across the nation which receive forest payments. An equitable system of payments for all forest counties nationwide is needed to protect the ability of these counties to provide quality schools and roads and to allow the federal government to uphold its part of the compact.

It is clear to me that the compact of 1908 is broken and needs to be fixed immediately. That is why I have introduced the County Schools Funding Revitalization Act of 1999. H.R. 2389 contains two main provisions. First, it would restore stability to the 25% payment compact by ensuring a predictable payment level to federal forest communities for an interim 5-year period. This temporary five-year payment program would be based on the average of the three highest payments received by a state in fiscal years from 1985 until this bill is enacted. This is obviously a necessary step to arrest the current destructive downward spiral. Secondly, the bill requires the federal government to collaborate with local community and school representatives as part of the Forest Counties Payment Committee to develop a permanent solution that will fix the 1908 compact for the long term.

There are other options that have been proposed to address this problem, from decoupling forest receipt payments from forest management activities to legislating or mandating timber harvest. My view is that the welfare of schools and county governments cannot be artificially disconnected from the economic stability and social vitality of rural counties. I do not feel that either one of those options is a starter in this Congress. However, I truly believe that the consensus compromise that H.R. 2389 represents is the one possibility that could be passed.

We, the federal government, must fulfill the promise made to these communities in 1908. In the part of the country where I come from, a man's word is his bond. Together, we can fix the compact and restore long-term stability to our rural schools and governments and the families that depend on them.

AIDS EPIDEMIC IS CRISIS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 1, 1999

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I want to draw the attention of my colleagues to the AIDS epidemic which sub-Saharan Africa faces today. In all, 11.5 million people have died in sub-Saharan Africa since the disease emerged in the 1980's, and 22.5 million people now living with the HIV virus are expected to die in the next ten years. By the end of 1997, at least 7.8 million children in this area of Africa alone were left orphans by the age of 14 due to AIDS.

I am submitting for the RECORD these articles from the May 29th issue of the USA Today, which detail the problem.

[From the USA Today, May 24, 1999]

TIME BOMB SOUTH OF SAHARA—U.S. URGED TO CONFRONT REALITY: 20% COULD DIE

(By Steve Sternberg)

SOWETO, SOUTH AFRICA.—When the AIDS virus detonates in this black township of 3 million in a decade or so, the disease will wipe out about 600,000 souls—almost six times as many people as the atomic bombs killed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

But unlike a nuclear blast or world war, the AIDS crisis is an explosion in slow motion, a creeping chain reaction with no end in sight. There is no sound, no searing heat, no mushroom cloud, no buildings reduced to rubble. Just one mute death after another.

Sandra Thurman has come here—to the country where AIDS is spreading faster than in any other on Earth—to break that silence.

Director of President Clinton's Office of National AIDS Policy, Thurman hopes to bring home to the American people and to Clinton the immensity of the crisis in South Africa and the other countries south of the Sahara that form the epicenter of AIDS.

To this end, Thurman and a small team of U.S. officials recently traveled through South Africa and three other countries at the heart of Africa's AIDS epidemic: Zambia, Zimbabwe and Uganda. A USA TODAY reporter and photographer accompanied them to document the ravages of what is now the No. 1 cause of death in Africa.

In all, 11.5 million people have died in sub-Saharan Africa since the epidemic emerged in the early 1980s, and 22.5 million now living with the virus are expected to die in the next 10 years, according to UNAIDS, the United Nations' AIDS agency.

Staggering as the numbers are, Thurman believes that the sub-Saharan epidemic has been met with indifference by Americans and, to some extent, by their government, which spends $74 million a year on AIDS programs in the region. In contrast, Congress this month voted to spend $1.1 billion to assist roughly 750,000 Kosovo refugees.

''When you're looking at whole generations of adults and children in jeopardy—we ought to be able to hold hands and sing Kumbaya around that,'' Thurman says. ''We can't do anything if we can't do this.''

To gauge the social and political costs of AIDS here, Thurman visited cities and shantytowns, orphanages and hospitals, taking in scenes from an epidemic.

One of Thurman's first stops was at the Javabu clinic, headquarters of the Soweto Project—an effort to unite medical care, social support and AIDS prevention.

The project is the brainchild of Mark Ottenweller, 10 years ago a prosperous internist in a leafy suburb of Atlanta. Today, at 47, he works in Johannesburg as a medical director of Hope Worldwide, the relief arm of the International Church of Christ.

The clinic is housed in a small cluster of brick buildings on a broad lawn, bordered by the brilliant splashes of jacaranda and bougainvillea. To its beneficiaries, it's a lifeline.

Mary Mudzingwa, 35, mother of Chipo, 9, and Gift, 5, credits the Soweto Project for helping her adapt to life with HIV.

''I lost may job. I lost a place to stay. Now I stay with friends, but there's no toilet, no water. Maybe that's why my 9-year-old is always sick.''

She says that one of the most difficult things about having the virus is the way it changes how people respond to you.

''Some people, I told them I am HIV-positive. They were afraid. I said, 'Don't be afraid. We look like other people.'''

Many of the people Mudzingwa was preaching to probably are infected themselves, though they don't know it.

Ninety-five percent of HIV carriers in sub-Saharan Africa have not been tested because tests are in short supply and many people deny they are at risk.

Consider the men Ottenweller comes across a few days later, on an AIDS-prevention foray into the shantytown of Klipstown, near Soweto. They grow silent as Ottenweller approaches.

''I'm Dr. Mark,'' he says, half in Zulu, half in English. ''How many of you guys wear condoms?''

Quizzical smiles bloom on embarrassed faces. Half the men raise their hands; half seem indifferent. ''I never use a condom,'' one man says defiantly. ''I stick to one partner.''

''But does she stick to you?'' the doctor asks. ''Come see me at the clinic when you get sick.''

''Ten years from now, one-fifth of these people will be dead,'' Ottenweller says later. ''HIV is going to hit this place like an atom bomb.''

Tests of women in prenatal clinics, a group believed to reflect the infection rate in the general population, show that at least one of every five people in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Botswana is infected with the AIDS virus.

That means those nations stand to lose at least one-fifth of their populations, a death toll that rivals the Black Plague in Medieval Europe.

In some places, the infection rates are much higher.

In South Africa, between 1991 and 1997, the infection rate on average soared from 2% to almost 18%. And in South Africa's most populous province, KwaZulu-Natal, the rate has reached 37%.

Alan Paton, in the classic 1948 novel Cry, the Beloved Country, described the province's rolling green hills as ''lovely beyond any singing of it.'' Those lovely jade hills outside Pietermaritzburg are still there.

But there also stands a massive brick building that is overflowing with human misery beyond any lamenting of it.

The building is a hospital known as Edendale.

During apartheid, it was for blacks only. That soon will change, as part of a massive South African health reform program under way.

For now, the battered wooden benches lined up in corridors and the large anterooms in the hospital's wards are packed with black people. Some are waiting to deliver babies—8,000 are born here each year, although there is just one obstetrician on the staff.

On average, 20 children are admitted to Edendale each day. More than 60% are infected with the AIDS virus, says pediatrician Johnny Ahrens, and they often are brought in by their grandmothers or aunts because their mothers have died.

The nurses in the pediatric HIV ward, once accustomed to returning children to health, now are so over-whelmed with dying infants that they are on the brink of cynicism.

Many nurses, Ahrens says, are beginning to think: ''If there's nothing you can do to help, why bother? It's just one more dying child.''

Ahrens himself is furious because he thinks the government should have done something, anything to stop HIV before it took hold.

''We all knew that HIV was going to hit South Africa. It was coming down through Africa like a red tide. People were trying to warn us. But nothing ever happened.

ZAMBIA: THE CRADLE OF AFRICA'S ORPHAN CRISIS

LUSAKA, ZAMBIA.—Fountain of Hope resembles nothing so much as a refugee camp for children. And it is nearly that for 1,500 of the 128,000 orphans who live on the streets of this lush capital, with its broad boulevards and spreading trees.

This informal day school in a shabby recreation center downtown was the first stop outside South Africa for Sandra Thurman, the White House's top AIDS official, on a recent fact-finding mission to see the AID's crisis in Africa.

Each morning, the youngest victims of AIDS, ranging in age from 3 to 15, straggle in from the streets. They don't come for the books or the playground or the toys. There aren't any. And there's nothing distinctive about the rec center, built of unadorned concrete.